

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JAMES E. DELANY

Chairman Stearns, Chairman Barton, Ranking Member Schakowsky, and Members of the Subcommittee: My name is Jim Delany, and I am Commissioner of the Big Ten Conference. I have held that position for the last 16 years. Before assuming my current duties, I was Commissioner of the Ohio Valley Conference for 10 years. I also served on the NCAA enforcement staff and, before beginning my career in intercollegiate athletic administration, served as counsel to the Judiciary Committee of the North Carolina Senate and as an attorney in the North Carolina Department of Justice. During my college days, I played basketball at the University of North Carolina under Coach Dean Smith. That was a wonderful experience for me, enabled me to get a first-rate education, and prepared me to seek a law degree, which I also received from North Carolina. As a student-athlete, I twice had the opportunity to play in the NCAA Final Four, although the tournament was quite a bit smaller in those days. I understand the thrill of competing for a national championship, and although we did not win a national championship while I was at North Carolina, playing in the Final Four was among the highlights of my athletic career. I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today about the post-season in Division I-A college football and to share with you the views of the Big Ten Conference about that subject.

I. THE BIG TEN'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ROSE BOWL

The Big Ten's perspective on post-season football is rooted in the history of college bowl games. The connection between members of the Big Ten Conference and the bowl system is as old as the bowls themselves. The University of Michigan played Stanford in the first Rose Bowl game in January 1902 and began what has been for our institutions a long and treasured relationship with the Pasadena Tournament of Roses Association. Since the 1946 season, with a

few exceptions in recent years, the champion of the Big Ten Conference has been invited to play annually in the Rose Bowl against the champion of the Pacific-10 Conference. It would be difficult to overstate the significance of that relationship to our conference, our member institutions individually, and our student-athletes and fans. By the 1920s, the Rose Bowl was well-established not only as a major sporting event in the United States, but also as a part of the nation's New Year's Day celebration. The opportunity to compete for an annual berth in that game has fostered the development of football programs at Big Ten institutions and added great excitement to our conference championship race over the years. Not only does the Rose Bowl relationship permit our champion to play in a renowned post-season football game, but our student-athletes, coaches, and fans are able to enjoy the many activities of the Tournament of Roses. In short, the Rose Bowl is far more than a football game; it is a great life experience, particularly for the student-athletes who are fortunate enough to participate. We are proud of our association with the Rose Bowl and grateful for the many benefits that it has brought to our conference.

At the same time, we like to believe that the Big Ten has helped the Rose Bowl build its tradition of excellence. We annually have sent our champion, which is generally a highly ranked and highly regarded team, to play in the game. Our fans have traveled great distances and in great numbers to the game, not only lured by the many events hosted by the Tournament of Roses and the warm weather of Southern California, but driven by great loyalty to and love for their favorite institution. Each year our alumni and fans purchase ten of thousands of tickets, fill numerous hotel rooms, and support the local community by taking part in all aspects of the Tournament of Roses celebration. The quality of our champion and the support it garners have helped the Tournament of Roses command broad national interest. That, in turn, has made the

Rose Bowl game attractive to television networks and generated revenues that have been returned to the participating conferences and sustained a number of charitable endeavors of the Tournament of Roses over the years.

Over the last 58 years, the Big Ten has consistently nurtured its traditional relationship with the Rose Bowl. In fact, until the mid-1970s, the Big Ten did not send any teams to bowl games other than the Rose Bowl. This was not because we did not have deserving teams; our conference runner up was often ranked among the top ten teams in the nation and occasionally among the top five. Yet our presidents, chancellors, and athletic administrators had such great admiration and affection for the Tournament of Roses and such a strong desire to make sure that our student-athletes' first aim was to win a Big Ten championship that we, as a conference, simply chose not to send non-champions to other bowl games, no matter how attractive those other games or how highly regarded our non-champion teams. While I believe that the loosening of that rule in the 1970s was good for our conference and a great benefit to our student-athletes who play on excellent teams that are not fortunate enough to win our conference title, it remains the case today that a Rose Bowl berth is the focal point of our conference race.

Of course, in the late 1990s, we decided to participate in the Bowl Championship Series arrangement. To do that, we had to alter our traditional relationship with the Rose Bowl in two ways. First, we had to amend our agreement with the Tournament of Roses to permit our champion to play in another bowl if it were ranked first or second in the nation and the national championship game was slated to be in another bowl. Second, in fairness to the Tournament of Roses, we had to agree to permit the Rose Bowl the opportunity to host a national championship game once every four years. That means that our champion will not play in the Rose Bowl when the national championship game is there unless it is ranked first or second.

While I believe that the decision to participate in the BCS was in the Big Ten's best interest and has been healthy for college football, it came only after a long and difficult debate among our member institutions. Some believed that our relationship with the Pasadena Tournament of Roses Association and the Rose Bowl game was too important to our conference to justify any tinkering. In the end, we agreed to the changes needed to make the BCS and its benefits possible, but the presidents and chancellors of Big Ten institutions considered the adjustments to the Rose Bowl relationship to be substantial sacrifices that could only be justified because: (1) they would produce an annual national championship game *and* (2) they were not likely to cause any significant harm to the Rose Bowl. Our presidents and chancellors remain committed to the Rose Bowl, are appreciative of its contributions to the Big Ten and to college football broadly, and have consistently stated that they do not wish to see the post-season in Division I-A altered in any manner that would have a negative impact on what they believe to be one of great institutions of intercollegiate athletics.

II. THE BIG TEN'S VIEW ON A MULTI-GAME, NFL-STYLE PLAYOFF

With the Rose Bowl relationship as backdrop, it is relatively easy to understand the position of the institutions of the Big Ten on a multi-game, NFL-style playoff for Division I-A college football. Our presidents and chancellors have consistently opposed the implementation of such a system and done so publicly, as have the presidents and chancellors of the member institutions of the Pacific-10 Conference and the Southeastern Conference. It is perhaps not surprising that these two conferences have taken positions similar to that of the Big Ten on this issue. The Pacific-10 Conference has had a longer relationship with the Rose Bowl than the Big Ten. With two exceptions since the beginning of the BCS arrangement, a current member of the Pacific-10 has played in every Rose Bowl game since 1920. No doubt the members of the Pacific-10 have the same admiration and respect for the Rose Bowl as the members of the Big

Ten. The Southeastern Conference is similarly situated with a bowl partner. It has had a long relationship with the Sugar Bowl in New Orleans that, in many respects, mirrors the Big Ten's relationship with the Rose Bowl.

Aside from their venerable football traditions and a history of superlative teams, coaches, and players, each of these conferences is similar in that a bowl relationship has occupied a central position in the conference's history and development. Those bowl connections have helped those conferences reach the levels of excellence that they have attained over the years. University administrators, alumni, and fans have great affinity for these games and have continued to support them year after year. Certainly no one in the Big Ten is anxious to see the implementation of a post-season system that is incompatible with or harmful to the bowl system. That is not to suggest that the presidents and chancellors of our conference or any other league are inflexible. We in the Big Ten, as well as the representatives of other conferences, have always been open to new ideas and approaches if they are consistent with the overall objectives of intercollegiate athletics and will improve college football. That is why the Big Ten ultimately agreed to participate in the BCS arrangement, notwithstanding the need to adjust our traditional relationship with the Rose Bowl.

A multi-game, NFL-style playoff for Division I-A, however, presents substantively different concerns that are significantly more problematic for the Big Ten than the changes required to make the BCS a reality. While the BCS arrangement required some incremental and, from the Big Ten perspective, important alterations to traditional post-season matchups, a multi-game playoff would require fundamental structural changes that, in our view, do not serve the interests of the bowls, student-athletes, the Big Ten Conference, or college football as a whole. The reasons that our presidents and chancellors have opposed such a playoff are

generally the same as those offered by proponents of the bowl system generally, but they bear repeating here because our special relationship with the Rose Bowl, we believe, makes those concerns concrete and compelling in a way that abstract discussion does not.

A. A Multi-Game, NFL-Style Playoff Will Likely Harm The Bowls.

1. It Is Not Clear That The Bowl System Can Survive Adoption Of A Multi-Game, NFL-Style Playoff.

As I have previously stated, the Big Ten Conference has taken great pride in its relationship with the Rose Bowl over the years and has done everything that it could to preserve and nurture the vitality of that game. While the Rose Bowl is the longest standing of our bowl relationships, we value our ties with each of the bowls that annually hosts one of our teams. Often our runner up teams play in one of the other fine bowls that are part of the BCS arrangement – the Fiesta, Orange, and Sugar Bowls – and even those teams from our conference that do not qualify for a BCS game enjoy the experience of post-season play. For example, we have been fortunate to have a long relationship with Florida Citrus Sports, the host of the Capital One Bowl in Orlando. That game has provided many of our student-athletes with a rewarding and memorable post-season experience. We regularly send teams to play in other fine bowls around the country as well. This year, seven Big Ten squads have qualified to play in bowl games. That means that approximately 700 of our student-athletes will have the opportunity to compete in the post-season and to enjoy the many attractions of the various communities that annually host bowl games.

A multi-game, NFL-style playoff will inevitably affect the bowl system. While we prefer to focus on the many benefits that the bowls provide, it would be naïve to ignore the fact that bowl games have an economic component and that the host committees are independent organizations that must respond to their own economic imperatives. Much of the money that

makes bowl games economically viable comes from television and sponsorships. A multi-game, NFL-style playoff is likely to siphon off the vast bulk, if not the totality, of the television and sponsorship dollars that are now supporting the bowl system, as the media and fan attention is drawn away from the bowls and focused squarely on the playoff games. The result, we in the Big Ten fear, would be the demise of some number of bowl games and perhaps the entire system itself.

The suggestion is often made that a multi-game playoff could be married with the bowl system in such a way to achieve both the goal of an undisputed national champion and preservation of the bowl games. In our view, there is no workable way to accommodate such a playoff format within the confines of the bowl system. The two systems are incompatible and operate with entirely different philosophies, a point that I further discuss below. But logistical considerations alone amply demonstrate that any melding of the bowls with a multi-game playoff format is not feasible. Bowls attract teams and fans to distant cities and offer many activities and events designed to cater to their interests and provide an enjoyable and memorable experience for all participants. One of the reasons that bowls often enter into relationships with specific conferences is predictability. The bowl can be certain that a particular conference will provide an attractive team with an energetic fan base that will travel to the game site. That predictability is lost with a multi-game playoff format. Fans cannot be expected to travel to various locales around the nation on a weekly basis during the month of December. Bowls hosting playoff contests cannot plan in advance because they will not know until one week before the game who will be participating. The inevitable result will be that early round playoff games will be played at the home field of one of the competing institutions and only the championship game will be played at a neutral site. That is exactly how the NCAA football championships and NFL

playoffs operate. There is no reason to believe that Division I-A football is immune from the realities that impel every other national football playoff to adopt such a format.

Perhaps of greater concern, however, is that attempting to turn the bowl games into playoff contests will inevitably alter the character of the bowls. As I have noted, the bowls are not merely venues for football games; they are events that are built around football games or that include games as the centerpiece of a larger celebration. Again, the Tournament of Roses provides a good example. The Pasadena Tournament of Roses Association began in 1890, some 12 years before the first Rose Bowl game was played. While the Rose Bowl game is a wonderful part of the Tournament of Roses, it is not the only event that draws many people. Every New Year's Day, millions tune in to watch the annual Rose Parade in Pasadena. Television coverage is extensive, and many participate in the festivities. Although athletic administrators tend to focus on sporting events, for many, the Rose Parade is synonymous with New Year's Day. Tournament of Roses officials, however, cannot be expected to shift the dates of the Rose Parade around annually to accommodate the needs of a Division I-A playoff. Other bowls with signature events attached to them will face exactly the same difficulties. Either the playoff will force the abandonment of such events or the decoupling of them from the games. In either event, a unique feature of the bowls will be lost.

Part of the great attraction of the bowl system is that coaches, players, and fans spend several days in a locale enjoying the hospitality of the host community and taking in the region's attractions and flavor. Bowl committees are able to make these events work because many volunteers and local organizations support their activities. That reliance on community assistance and volunteer labor means that bowls must bend to the realities of the calendar. If the connection between the game and the surrounding activities is severed, then the ability of the

bowls to attract the scores of volunteers necessary to stage the game will be significantly compromised. Coaches, who will rightly be worried about advancing to the next round of the playoffs, will not be interested in taking their teams to a city well in advance of a game, especially if there are no other activities associated with the game. There will be no particular reason for fans to travel to the bowl site, even assuming that their pocketbooks and schedules will allow such travel. In short, the bowls will become mere game venues. That has never been the sum of the bowl experience, but it is a likely outcome of any attempt to shoehorn a multi-game playoff system into the bowl structure. It is doubtful that many bowl games could survive under those circumstances, and certainly the presidents and chancellors of the Big Ten have not been willing to gamble with one of the great traditions of college football on such a long-shot approach.

2. Alternative Playoff Formats Pose Substantial Difficulties For The Big Ten.

We are often asked whether some other approach using the bowl system, short of a multi-game, NFL-style playoff, might be a suitable means of determining a national champion. For example, there are some who suggest that a single game played after the regular bowls – a so-called “Plus One” model – could be incorporated into the bowl system so that a national champion can be crowned when there are three or more unbeaten teams or once-beaten teams at the end of the season that all have arguable claim to the title. Again, this option may be more attractive in the abstract than in its implementation and, in the view of the presidents and chancellors of the Big Ten, could potentially affect the bowl system in many of the same ways as a multi-game, NFL-style playoff.

Last year provides a good example of some of the difficulties with a “Plus One” approach from the Big Ten perspective. Unbeaten USC was the Pacific-10 champion and ranked number

1 at the end of the 2004 season. Oklahoma and Auburn were ranked 2 and 3 respectively and were also undefeated. To varying degrees California, Texas, and Utah could also claim to be among the top 4 teams in the nation. Setting aside the difficulty of choosing a fourth team, a challenge that could conceivably be surmounted, there remains a substantial issue about how teams are slotted into bowl games and which teams are affected.

Michigan was the Big Ten champion in 2004 and was ranked 12th in one poll and 13th in the other at the end of the regular season. That was one of the lower-ranked Big Ten champions in recent years, but nonetheless, Michigan had a very fine squad. Consistent with our relationship with the Rose Bowl and our commitment as part of the BCS arrangement, we expected that our champion would play in the Rose Bowl game, which it did. While Michigan did not have the opportunity to play top-ranked USC, as it would have had there been no BCS arrangement, we in the Big Ten understood that was a possibility and were willing to accept that contingency in the interest of making a national championship game possible. Michigan played a very highly regarded Texas team in the Rose Bowl in what turned out to be one of the greatest Rose Bowl games ever played – a game that was decided on a field goal as time expired.

A post-bowl championship game in 2004, however, would have had a substantial impact on the Big Ten Conference. Because USC was ranked number 1 and was champion of the Pacific-10, it would have been slotted to play in the Rose Bowl. Presumably, Oklahoma and Auburn would have played against one another in a different bowl game. There is simply no way to resolve the national championship question in a Plus One model without pairing those two teams in a game. But the far more difficult question and the one that has direct impact on the Big Ten is: Who does USC play in the Rose Bowl? On the one hand, an unbeaten Utah or once-beaten Texas and California squads, all of which had better records and were ranked higher

than Michigan, could claim some entitlement to play against USC. Moreover, Oklahoma and Auburn could both say that as a matter of fairness USC should have to play against a highly ranked opponent in order to advance to the post-bowl championship. After all, why, they might argue, should USC get to play a 12th ranked Michigan when the number 2 and 3 teams must play against other in order to advance to the championship? In short, the so-called “Plus One” model, if it is to provide an undisputed national champion, appears to necessitate a seeding of teams and slotting in bowl games accordingly. But that is precisely the problem for the Big Ten in this scenario and why any “Plus One” arrangement poses significant concerns to our presidents and chancellors.

The Big Ten was willing to participate in the BCS arrangement and to alter its relationship with the Rose Bowl in a manner that it believed was good for college football and would not harm its relationship with the Rose Bowl. We agreed to play in another bowl when our champion was ranked 1 or 2 in order to facilitate a national championship game. That permitted our champion to play for a national title, but we also noted that we would be depriving the Rose Bowl in that situation of a highly ranked and attractive team. In recognition of the Rose Bowl’s sacrifice in that circumstance, we also agreed that our champion would not play in the Rose Bowl every fourth year, unless it was ranked 1 or 2, so that the Rose Bowl could be certain of hosting a national championship game. We did not agree – and the Tournament of Roses did not ask us to do so – to vacate our slot when our champion would have ordinarily played in the Rose Bowl. Had that been a condition of our involvement in the BCS arrangement, I seriously doubt that our presidents and chancellors would have approved our participation at that time. As I noted, some of our member institutions felt that even the changes that we did make were too great. A “Plus One” format would potentially call on the Big Ten to make a substantially greater

sacrifice with a far more significant impact on our conference and its member institutions. I cannot say that our presidents and chancellors would never consider the alternative. As I noted, we are always open to new ideas and approaches. But as of today, any iterations of the “Plus One” concept that have been bandied about in the media would not satisfy the test that the Big Ten presidents and chancellors have historically applied when addressing our relationship with the Rose Bowl. Unless the substantive issues that are posed by the “Plus One” format are resolved in a way that meets that test, I believe that it would be difficult for the Big Ten to support such an alternative.

B. A Multi-Game, NFL-Style Playoff Is Inconsistent with the Goal of Maximizing Post-Season Opportunities for Our Student-Athletes.

A close corollary to the Big Ten’s concern about potential harm to the bowls is our fear that a multi-game, NFL-style playoff will reduce the number of post-season opportunities for our student-athletes, coaches, and fans. This year, some 700 football players at Big Ten institutions will compete in post-season bowl games. Many will visit areas of the country in which they have never traveled and be offered first-rate hospitality from bowl committees and their armies of volunteers. While we have only one conference championship and one Rose Bowl berth to offer, we routinely turn out multiple ranked teams. Because the record of our teams against non-conference opposition in recent years has been superb, we will often have a substantial majority of our teams finishing the season with winning records.

The presidents and chancellors of Big Ten member institutions have been concerned about maintaining post-season opportunities for as many of our teams as possible. A broad-based bowl system furthers that goal. This year, we are fortunate to place two teams in the BCS bowl games. Penn State, our conference champion, will travel to Miami for the Orange Bowl game, and Ohio State will play in the Fiesta Bowl in Tempe. In addition, we expect to have

runner up teams in the Capital One Bowl in Orlando, the Outback Bowl in Tampa, the Alamo Bowl in San Antonio, the Sun Bowl in El Paso, and the Music City Bowl in Nashville. We also often are able to place a team in the Motor City Bowl in Detroit. Each of these bowls offers a distinctive experience for our student-athletes, and we are not anxious to see any of them jeopardized by a multi-game playoff structure.

C. A Multi-Game, NFL-Style Playoff Would Have A Detrimental Impact On The Regular Season In The Big Ten And In All Of College Football.

The concern about the impact of a multi-game playoff on the regular season in college football cannot be overemphasized. Among major sports in the United States today, college football stands alone in crowning its champion based almost exclusively upon regular-season performance. Protection of that unique regular season has been a significant concern of the presidents and chancellors of the Big Ten.

I have spoken about our historical relationship with the Rose Bowl and the place that it has in our conference. The Rose Bowl, however, cannot be separated from our regular season championship race. The first goal of every Big Ten team is a conference championship. I suspect that the same is true in other conferences as well. Not only does a Big Ten championship carry with it a berth in the Rose Bowl, but it has been a prerequisite for any of our teams with national championship aspirations. The same is true of other conferences as well. While I have not made an exhaustive study of the issue, since 1970, no team that was a member of a conference has won a national championship in Division I-A football without first winning its conference title. Therefore, a conference championship in Division I-A football remains a stepping stone to a national title.

The Big Ten has benefited greatly from this emphasis on conference championships. Our regular season games have been attractive to fans who regularly pack our stadiums and to

broadcasters who telecast those contests around the nation. We have traditional end-of-the-year rivalries, such as Ohio State-Michigan, that are of great interest, not only to fans of Big Ten institutions but also to fans across the country, precisely because they often have considerable bearing on our conference championship and thus the national picture as well. A multi-game playoff format, however, will transform a season-ending showdown between an unbeaten Ohio State and unbeaten Michigan into a game over playoff seeding. The regular-season game will not have nearly the same significance in determining the national championship as it does today, especially given the prospect that the same teams might meet again in a few weeks in a game that has arbitrarily been invested with much greater significance. Today, the regular season functions as a lengthy elimination tournament. Therefore, *every* game is important. The presidents and chancellors of Big Ten universities do not believe that alterations to the post-season structure that dilute the significance of the regular season are beneficial to the Big Ten as a league or to college football generally.

D. The Bowl System Is Consistent with the Academic Missions of Big Ten Universities.

Over the years, much has been written about the impact of intercollegiate sports on the academic missions of the nation's colleges and universities. Many have been critical of major college sports in general, and Division I-A football in particular, for what are perceived as variances between the values espoused by the nation's colleges and universities and the actual operation of major college athletic programs. I cannot address these criticisms here, although I believe most of them to be unfounded. Nonetheless, these criticisms do have a useful function in framing the debate about post-season football. That function is to remind all of us who have the privilege of serving in intercollegiate athletics – from presidents and chancellors, to conference commissioners, athletic directors, and coaches – that we are not engaged in a purely athletic

endeavor. College football is not an amateur version of the National Football League, no matter how often that analogy might be trumpeted. Rather, college football is football in the academic tradition. The job of Big Ten institutions is not to turn out superb athletic teams but to educate young men and women and prepare them for the challenges that lie ahead.

The presidents and chancellors of Big Ten institutions are keenly aware of their responsibilities not merely as overseers of athletic departments but as stewards of the educational institutions entrusted to their care. Their first duty is not to the fan or sports columnist who desperately desires finality to the national championship picture in college football but to the students who attend their respective universities and, by extension, to their parents who sacrifice to pay tuition, and in most cases, state taxpayers who provide substantial support for our institutions and rightfully expect that the core academic missions of Big Ten universities will be each administration's overriding concern. At bottom, then, decisions made by Big Ten presidents and chancellors concerning the format of post-season football, the needs of their various universities, and the priorities that they wish to establish for themselves as a league reflect considered educational judgment. Given the competing interests that they must balance and the numerous factors that they must weigh, I believe it is virtually impossible to second-guess their conclusions.

If, as some of our critics have charged, college football has strayed too far from the original model envisioned for amateur athletics in the academic tradition, then we hardly hasten a return to that model by expanding the Division I-A post-season to a multi-game, NFL-style playoff format. If, on the other hand, we have heven to the aims that have animated intercollegiate athletics at least since the founding of the NCAA, as I believe we have, then there is no reason to tamper with the delicate balance that has been struck.

A final word need be said about money. Critics of college football line up on both sides of this issue. Some claim that the bowl system persists and is not jettisoned for a playoff format because the bowl system enriches certain conferences. That allegation is preposterous. The amount of money that could be generated by an annual college football playoff dwarfs the revenues that are derived from the bowl games. Thus, were money the motivating factor, the bowl system would have been abandoned many years ago.

Other critics have said that college football is not maximizing its revenues by maintaining the bowl system. That statement may or may not be accurate. Any prediction about whether overall revenues would increase by the adoption of a playoff must also account for any reduction in revenues from regular season football as a result of its relative decline in importance in the national championship picture. I do believe, however, that a multi-game playoff would be immensely popular with television networks and sponsors and would generate substantial revenues. The Big Ten presidents and chancellors are fully aware of the economic potential of a college football playoff. Yet they have consistently opposed a multi-game, NFL-style playoff notwithstanding its revenue-generating potential.

In sum, the Big Ten presidents and chancellors have resolved this issue for the conference as they have every other major athletic or academic question that has faced our 11 institutions as a league over the years – namely, by carefully considering the myriad relevant factors and ultimately bringing to bear the wisdom that we believe should be expected of persons entrusted with the governance of our member universities. We are confident that the decisions that they have made concerning post-season football are best for the members of the Big Ten and believe that they are consonant with the interests of Division I-A as a whole.